

OFFICIAL FESTIVAL PROGRAM



43rd ANNUAL
Plymouth
ICE FESTIVAL

JANUARY 31 – FEBRUARY 2, 2025

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43RD ANNUAL *Plymouth* ICE FESTIVAL JANUARY 31 – FEBRUARY 2, 2025

Winter Wonderland Annual Ice Festival transforms downtown Plymouth streets

Every winter, downtown Plymouth transforms into a sparkling winter wonderland. Again this year, the highly anticipated 2025 Ice Festival will take place Jan. 31 through Feb. 2, when downtown Plymouth will host an ice-filled spectacle, bringing the community together for three days of frosty fun and stunning ice sculptures. This year promises to be bigger, better, and more dazzling than ever before, with something for everyone to enjoy, organizers said.

The centerpiece of the Ice Festival is undoubtedly the jaw-drop-

ping collection of ice sculptures. Another popular event allows visitors to watch as talented ice artists carve enormous blocks of ice into intricate works of art. From life-sized sculptures to whimsical designs, each ice sculpture is crafted with precision and skill by professional carvers. The artworks will line the streets of downtown Plymouth in addition to those on exhibit in Kellogg Park.

The Ice Festival has become a tradition will local families who attend each year to enjoy the sculptures and

the various activities. The festival offers an atmosphere of family fun along with seasonal snacks like hot cocoa and freshly baked treats.

Visitors can sample the flavors of winter as food trucks and local vendors offer warm comfort foods, snacks, and beverages.

In addition, visitors can browse the Winter Market at The Gathering where local artisans and craftsmen will showcase their handmade goods-from winter accessories to

See **Wonderland**, page 4



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Wonderland from page 3

one-of-a-kind art pieces.

One of the highlights of the 2025 Ice Festival is the Ice Carving Competition. Skilled artisans will compete in live carving demonstrations, transforming blocks of ice into mesmerizing works of art as visitors look on.

Audience members will have a chance to see the ice artists in action, each with their own unique techniques and vision. The competition promises to be an exciting, high-energy event, organizers said.

“The 2025 Ice Festival is a perfect way to spend time with family, friends, or loved ones during the winter season,” they added.



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When it all began...

Japanese ice and snow sculpture show inspired first festival

It has taken more than 40 years for the Plymouth Ice Festival to achieve and surpass the success the original organizers anticipated when the “Ice Spectacular” was first suggested to city officials.

The history of the event, depending on who is telling the story, includes the names of many public officials and familiar names associated with the development and growth of the community, but all agree that it did begin about 43 years ago. It was in 1982, according to most versions of the tale, when local businessman Scott Lorenz proposed the

idea of an annual winter celebration in Kellogg Park after watching a feature story on 60 Minutes about a snow and ice festival in Sapporo, Japan.

Lorenz told his fellow business owners that the segment showed thousands of people from throughout Japan flock into Sapporo to view the giant images of buildings, cartoon characters and assorted subject carved from ice and snow. In an interview several years ago, Lorenz said he was confident the event would bring business to downtown Plymouth.

“If they could do this Sapporo, I knew we could do this in Plymouth,” Lorenz

said during that interview. He said he wanted to create an event to bring commerce to downtown merchants and restaurants during the slow retail period after the holidays.

His efforts have obviously proven successful in the past four decades as the event is now rated as one of the top winter events in the state by some tourist bureaus. The crowds have recently reached an estimated 100,000 people coming to view the artistry of the carvers and enjoy the family activities during the

See **History**, page 6



Huge snow sculptures like these were the inspiration for the first “Ice Spectacular” in Plymouth.

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History from page 5

three-day event.

Lorenz said the purpose of the event was to bring the community a unique event while providing local retailers and restaurant owners a “much needed shot in the arm” during the slow months in sales after the holidays.

During his tenure managing and organizing the “Ice Spectacular” as it was originally called, Lorenz made several trips to Japan and Canada to recruit artists and teachers to participate in the ice carving exhibition. He also negotiated agreements that continue to exist today, including a relationship with local culinary colleges to have students exhibit during the show.

Lorenz, however, said there are many other people who deserve recognition for the continued growth and longevity of the event. He said after his epiphany about having an ice festival in the city, he tried to recruit volunteers and sponsors for the event. He said the first two men he talked with about his idea were his father, Ralph, who at that time owned the former Mayflower Hotel and Hank Graper, the city manager at the



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time.

While the elder Lorenz thought his son's idea was “crazy,” Graper talked to downtown businesses and secured \$1,000 in early donations. With that money and “lots of walking and talking,” the duo hosted the first ice festival 45-days after Lorenz saw the 60 Minutes feature.

With Lorenz as the leader of the event and Graper working behind the scenes, the script for success lasted for more than 10 years.

Current City Manager Paul Sincock, who worked as assistant manager under Graper, said his former boss was dedicated to the ice-carving event from the beginning.

“The festival came along at a time when there was a downturn in the economy,” said Sincock, during that previous interview. He credited Graper with realizing the potential of this event as not only an economic engine, but also as an entertaining event which would bring the community together.

“He's the guy that got things moving and kept them moving along,” Sincock said.

In 1992, the spectacular event faced a crisis when Lorenz decided to step down as organizer for the event during the same time Graper's contract with the city expired. With the festival dates set and the two leaders leaving, a local real estate developer- along with members of the Plymouth Community Chamber of Commerce- stepped in.

“I was asked to help out with raising money,” said the late Jim Jabara, a former city mayor who became more involved with the event after then chamber President Pam Kosteva teamed him up with Tom Caviston to raise the necessary proceeds to keep the event afloat. The team was able to generate

\$140,000 and Lorenz credits Jabara and his fellow fundraisers for keeping the ice festival alive during that perilous time.

Management of the event was then entrusted to Mike Watts of WattsUp who organized the ice festival for several years and guided the community event through some difficult economic times. In 2009, the ice festival was nearly retired due to the difficult economy, when the decision was made to hire Sam Walton of Signature Professional Group to manage the event. Walton began a recovery effort and when he moved on, James Gietzen of JAG entertainment took the helm of the event.

Gietzen rejuvenated the event adding more family and participant events while expanding the number of carvings on display and the number of artisans who demonstrate their skills during the famous ice-carving competitions and several other features which have become traditions at the festival.

The ice festival, thanks to major community sponsors, continues to be free and open to the public and with 100,000 visitors expected this year, has regained the enormous popularity that Lorenz once envisioned as he watched 60 Minutes more than four decades ago.



The Sapporo Japan Ice and Snow Sculpture Show continues to attract thousands of visitors annually.

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Spectacular show

Ice carving artistry expected to attract 100,000 visitors this year

Visitors to the Plymouth Ice Show this year certainly won't be disappointed in the sculptures filling Kellogg Park and throughout the downtown area Jan. 31, Feb. 1 and 2.

James Gietzen of JAG Entertainment who produces the event each year, said there will be plenty of spectacular artwork displayed on city sidewalks in front of nearly every business along with the larger carvings on display in Kellogg Park. In addition, several traditional festival features will be back to entertain crowds.

The event is expected to see as many as 100,000 visitors this year as the event continues to attract crowds from throughout the area.

As the audiences and crowds grow, Gietzen continues to add features while ensuring the events families have come to enjoy return each year.

The tubing run, always one of the most popular events at the festival, will be back along with the Family Petting Farm and pony rides. Last year, the animals attracted a large crowd of younger visitors, all eager to

touch and pet the various animal visitors. The pony rides are especially popular, Gietzen noted, as the animals are calm and well cared for. The petting farm and pony rides will be located next to the ice playground this year.

A record crowd is expected again this year at the Jan. 31, Feb. 1 and Feb. 2 event unless Mother Nature decides to send one of the 40- or 50-degree temperature fluctuations experienced in the area lately.

See **Crowds**, page 10



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Howard A. Hamerink, DDS

Crowds from page 9

The weather is always the uncontrollable element in producing the event. Gietzen said temperatures in the high 30s or even low 40s would be ideal for maintaining the artistry of the sculptures and be reasonably comfortable for visitors. Gietzen said weather that is too warm is just as damaging to attendance as uncomfortable cold.

Gietzen and his crew have faced both extremes in their experience at the Ice Festival, along with about the worst weather phenomena for the event: rain. He and the crew have seen years where despite their efforts to cover the sculptures with tented tarps and awnings, rain has



James Gietzen

pretty much destroyed the sculptors' work.

"Weather is always a factor," Gietzen said, "but this is always such a great opportunity for families to

have something fun to do during the colder weather. It really is a good time." He said he believes people look forward to having a fun destination after the holidays.

The Ice Throne in Kellogg Park will be available for family photos as it has been for several years along with an interactive ice playground for children.

The Hot Spot, located in The Gathering across from Kellogg Park will be open during festival hours to warm up visitors.

The Hot Spot is provided annually by Ehlers Heating and Cooling. The Gathering will also be the place local vendors, artisans and visitors will have information available and items for sale.

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Pretty slick

Back by popular demand for the 2025 Ice Festival is the Tubing Run. Daring visitors can ride one of the inflatable tubes 100 feet down the provided ramp. Always one of the most popular events at the event, the tubing run will be open from 6 until 9 p.m. Friday; from 11 a.m. until 9 p.m. Saturday and from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Sunday.



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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Events

4th Annual Preview Party for Special Needs Families Presented by The Miracle League of Plymouth

This free event will feature ice blocks to touch, winter-themed arts and crafts, hot beverages, fun ice games with prizes and performances, and more.

ICE CARVINGS

Enjoy sidewalks lined with ice carvings in downtown Plymouth. Each work of art starts as a 350 pound block of ice. World-renowned ice carvers have created more than 60 carvings to be displayed during this year's event!

ICE FESTIVAL BINGO

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Collect enough stickers to get a bingo and enter to win a prize from The Plymouth DDA. Bingo cards are available at all participating businesses.

The Hot Spot Heated By

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Warm up in style at the Hot Spot, heated by Ehlers Heating and Air Conditioning. It is located under The Gathering, directly across from Kellogg Park. The Hot Spot features local vendors, businesses, product demonstrations, a sitting area and most importantly lots of heat. The Hot Spot is open during all of the official open hours of the Festival.

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ICE THRONE Presented by:

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For years, this unique ice carving has been the perfect setting for family pictures. Festival guests will feel like Ice Festival royalty as they sit atop the Ice Throne. This activity has been a tradition for many families, as they return for that picture every year.

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Tubing Run

Back by popular demand. Get ready for an avalanche of excitement at The Plymouth Ice Festival tubing run! It features over 100 feet of tubing excitement and fun for the whole family.

Tubing Run Hours of operation:

Friday 6 until 9 p.m.

Saturday, 11a.m. until 9 p.m.

Sunday 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Family Petting Zoo Presented by Michigan First Credit Union

Located next to the Ice Playground, Carousel Acres will offer a hands-on experience with horses, donkeys, goats, sheep, alpacas, and even a baby calf. This activity is great for kids or those who are young at heart. This year the Petting Farm will also feature pony rides.



Saturday, 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Sunday, 11 a.m. until 5 p.m.

Crazy Craig Family Comedy Juggling Variety Show Presented by DTE Energy Foundation
The Crazy Craig Family Comedy Juggling Variety Show is an experience visitors will not soon forget.

All ages, from toddlers and grade school children to teens, young adults, parents, seniors, and everyone in between will enjoy Crazy Craig who keeps audiences smiling, laughing, and wanting more of his antics.

Show times

Friday 5:30, 6:30 and 7:30 p.m.

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Movies at the Penn Theater

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Enjoy Frozen II at 7 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, 5 p.m. on Sunday.

The party lot and ice bar are located at EG. Nicks

The unique Ice Bar presented by Pink Whitney is open all three days of the festival.

Live entertainment in a huge heated tent will take place from 7 until 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Ava James and the Rumors will entertain Friday and Saturday Power Play Detroit will be on the tent stage.

Official warming stations of The Plymouth Ice Festival.

Ehlers heating and cooling "Hot Spot" Located next to the Penn Theater, 790 Penniman Ave. Food, Drinks, face painting, vendors, and bathrooms are available. Ehlers Hot Spot is open all festival hours.

HomeCraft Real Estate is offering a warming station located at 487 Forest Ave.. directly across from EG Nick's. Warm up with complementary hot chocolate, coffee, and tea, and enjoy some sweet treats for the little ones. The Forest Avenue HotSpot will be open during all official festival hours.

The Plymouth Community United Way will again be offering hot drinks and sweet treats from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 1. The office is located at 960 W. Ann Arbor Trail, Suite 2.

Good neighbors

Michigan First is presenting sponsor of 2025 Ice Festival

Michigan First Credit Union is proud to serve as the presenting sponsor for the 2025 Plymouth Ice Festival. As members of the Plymouth business community, we're excited to show our support for downtown Plymouth and help take this amazing event to new heights, and as an organization, we feel deeply aligned with the Plymouth Ice Festival's commitment to community. We are proud to support this event while making even more memories in downtown Plymouth!

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to win game tickets!*

themed ice carving, plus opportunities to win game tickets!

We would like to thank the other sponsors and the city of Plymouth for keeping the Ice Festival traditions alive and supporting local businesses and the mission of providing winter fun for families. We can't wait to be a part of the festival's growth over the next few years and hope everyone enjoys the spectacular ice sculptures and exciting lineup of events.

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Planning Your Perfect Ice Festival Day?

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Furry friends

Popular petting farm, pony rides entertain youngsters

While the ice sculptures may be the stars of the Plymouth Ice Festival, a set of special guests rivals the artistic carvings for the attention of visitors.

The petting farm and pony rides provided by Carousel Acres are among the most popular events at the Ice Festival and the crowds are always entertained by the farm animals and ponies provided by owner Tammy Iacobelli. Carousel Acres has been providing specialized animals for schools, parties and festivals for nearly three decades and has perfected the hugely popular animal interactions. Iacobelli noted that children love to see the farm and sometimes more exotic creatures she brings to local events.

This year, the number of ponies, along with the variety of other animals will depend on the weather as Iacobelli won't take a chance on any of her animals getting ill or chilled.

"These are all animals we have raised here on the farm so we understand their temperament and nature. We won't take a chance with them," she explained in a previous interview. She added there are lots of available animals she could bring, including a miniature horse, a donkey, some goats, a sheep or two, an alpaca and perhaps some ducks and bunnies and even a baby calf.

She said the roster of animals always depends on the weather. She explained that the bunnies are not usually outside,

so she was unsure of how they might adapt if the weather is really cold. She stressed that all the animals she brings are used to being handled and around people since they have all been raised at the farm and are socialized.

Iacobelli and her family, including daughters and grandchildren, are all involved with the farm. She worked in special education for 28 years before operating Carousel Acres full time. She said she expects to send two staff members with the animals for the ice festival. She said she was unsure about how many ponies she might bring for the pony rides this year.

See **Animals**, page 18



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Animals from page 17

This year the pony rides and petting farm will be located near the ice playground. The petting farm will be open from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday.

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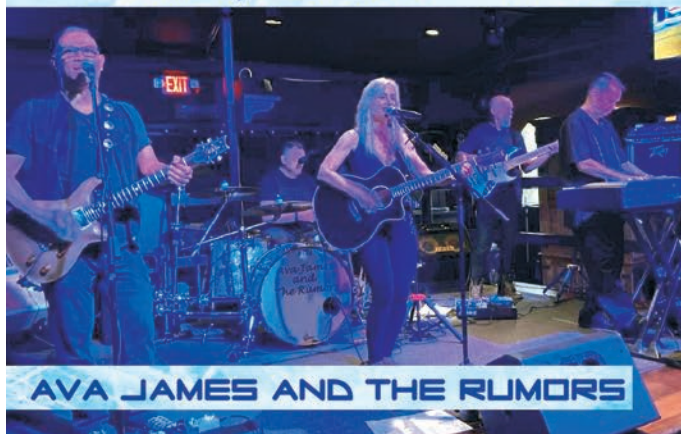
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Party time

E.G. Nicks hosting unique ice bar, live entertainment

The hottest place in Plymouth during the Ice Festival is undoubtedly E.G. Nicks on Forest Street where the ice bar is set up on the front patio and the Party Tent takes place in the rear parking lot.

The Party Tent has become a tradition at several local event in the city as it is a fundraiser for the Plymouth-Canton Vietnam Veterans of America. The live music in the huge, heated tent on Friday and Saturday nights brings in crowds of the over-21 crowd who donate a \$5 cover charge to help the veterans. Beer and wine service in the tent is handled by E.G. Nick's owners Frank Agostini and Tony Belli who started hosting popular bands in the

tent nearly a decade ago.

"Now, it just wouldn't be the festival without it," Agostini said. The novelty ice bar started about 10 years ago when carvers created a bar, with seating, on what was then the front of the restaurant. "They did a fantastic job back then" Agostini said, "and it just gets better and better." Now the novelty of having a really cold drink attracts a group of regulars who wouldn't miss the event, along with folks who haven't seen the unusual serving method before. There is a bartender on hand at the ice bar all weekend and patrons keep him busy, Agostini noted. There have been some "unusual" serving methods involved over the past years,

he said.

In addition to the ice bar, the Party Tent has now grown into one of the most popular events in the area particularly when a popular band is performing on the tent stage. This year, according to Agostini, he expects large crowds both Friday and Saturday because of the following both bands have.

"On Friday night we were lucky enough to get Ava James and the Rumors and they are really popular," Agostini said. "We had them last year and the crowd loved them." The heated tent includes a professional sound system and is comfortable no matter what the exterior temperature might



42ND ANNUAL *Plymouth* ICE FESTIVAL FEBRUARY 2-4, 2024



Power Play Detroit will take to the stage in the heated tent behind E.G. Nick's to entertain from 7 until 11 p.m. Saturday.

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Saturday night, Power Play Detroit will take to the tent stage. Agostini said the band drew a huge crowd last year and fills the tent nearly to capacity whenever they appear.

"They are a real crowd favorite with a huge following," he said. "I was glad to get them."

The tents have become one of, if not the, largest fundraiser for the Vietnam veterans' group. The vets check identification at the tent entrance and collect the \$5 cover charge and attach the identifying wristbands to visitors.

People never hesitate or complain about the \$5 cover charge, Agostini said, because the money is donated to the veterans' organization. He said every year he sees people put \$20 or \$50 bills in the collection jar to help support the veterans group.

The Ice Festival is one of Agostini and Belli's favorite community events, they admitted. "This is just a great time and a lot of fun at a time of year when we need a little entertainment. I think we enjoy it as much as the

crowds do."

The Vietnam Veteran's of America Chapter 528 of Plymouth Canton is

nationally chartered and is dedicated to supporting issues important to Vietnam veterans and their families.



Ava James and Rumors will perform in the Party Tent benefitting Vietnam Veterans on Friday during the Ice Festival.



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